

# RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF DOWNHAM.

## ANNUAL REPORT OF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR 1938.

Mr. Chairman, Lady and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to place before you my Annual Report for the year 1938, set out in accordance with Circular 1728 (England) of the Ministry of Health.

### General Remarks.

During 1938 there was a population increase in Downham Rural District of 190.

Sixty-eight new houses were erected, 36 by private enterprise, and 32 by the Local Authority,

The general health of your District has remained good. There were no epidemics during the year, and half as many cases of infectious disease occurred as in 1937.

Scarlet Fever predominated, and was mostly of a mild type. Where proper isolation can be obtained at home there is no advantage in removing cases of Scarlet Fever to Hospital; whereas, with diphtheria, early Hospital treatment is most desirable.

During the present year, your Council has taken steps to make full use of their Diphtheria Immunisation Scheme among school children.

The Birth-rate for 1938 in your District was slightly below that for the previous year, but was above the rate for England and Wales as a whole.

The two chief causes of Death were Heart Disease and Cancer.

The incidence of all other diseases was slight and requires no special comment.

I am,

Yours obediently,

WILLIAM W. WILDMAN.

M.B. Ed., D.P.H. Lond.

Medical Officer of Health.

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### Public Health Officers of the Local Authority.

#### (a) Medical.

Dr. J. Gibb, your previous part-time M.O.H., relinquished his appointment on September 30th, 1938.

Your present Medical Officer took up duty on October 1st, 1938. is engaged in whole-time public health work, and holds the following combined appointment :

Medical Officer of Health to Downham Rural District Council	} and Assistant Medical Officer to the Norfolk County Council.
Downham Urban " "	
Marshland Rural " "	

#### (b) Others :

- (i) One full-time Sanitary Inspector, who holds the following qualifications : C.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.
- (ii) One full-time Building Surveyor and Water Engineer with the following qualifications :  
A.R.S.I., M.S.I.A.

## SECTION A.

### 1. General Statistics :

Area in Acres	...	124,152
Population (estimated mid-1938)	...	20,590
Number of inhabited houses (end of 1938)	...	5,563
Rateable value of Rural District	...	£50,309
Sum represented by a Penny Rate	...	£229

### 2. Vital Statistics :

	Total	M	F	England & Wales
<b>LIVE BIRTHS</b>				
Legitimate	325	155	170	
Illegitimate	12	1	11	
Birth rate per 1000 estimated population	15.79			15.1
<b>STILL BIRTHS :</b>				
Legitimate	13	9	4	
Illegitimate	Nil			
Rate per 1000 Total (Live & Still) births	35.50			
<b>DEATHS :</b>				
D. Rate per 1000 estimated resident population	10.49			11.6
Deaths from Puerperal Causes	1			
Rate per 1000 total births	2.95			
Puerperal Sepsis	1			
Other Puerperal Causes	Nil			
Death Rate of infants under one year of age :—				
Total deaths	15	4	11	
Legitimate		4	10	
Illegitimate		Nil	1	
All Infants per 1000 live-births	46.15			53
Legitimate infants per 1000 legit live-births	44.73			
Illegitimate " " illegit " "	83.33			

Deaths from Cancer	(all ages)	...	...	32	
from Measles	"	...	...	Nil	
from Whooping-cough	"	...	...	1	
from Diarrhoea (under 2-yrs)		...	...	2	
Rate per 1000 live-births	...	...	...	6.15	5.5

Causes of Death		M.	F.			M.	F.
Tuberculosis (Respiratory)	...	2	2	Bronehitis	... ..	0	4
„ (Other)	...	1	0	Pneumonia (all forms)	... ..	3	2
Cancer	... ..	17	15	Peptic Ulcer	... ..	1	2
Diabetes	... ..	1	2	Prematurity, congenital, debility etc.		4	3
Cerebral Hæmorrhage	... ..	3	6	Senility	... ..	3	4
Heart Disease	... ..	33	39	Suicide	... ..	0	3
Other circ ; Diseases	... ..	11	9	Other Violence	... ..	14	3

### Social Conditions of the Area.

There have been no departures from the previous year.

The establishment of Permanent Air-Ministry Stations at Marham and Feltwell has helped to encourage a better general standard of living in these areas.

There were 134 marriages in your District during 1938. 158 persons received Outdoor Relief during the year : 44 males, 82 females and 32 children.

## SECTION B. General Provisions of Health Services for the Area.

**Hospitals.** The two main Hospitals serving the area are

- (a) The West Norfolk and King's Lynn General Hospital.
- (b) The Downham Public Assistance Institution.

**Infectious Disease** cases are now removed to the County Isolation Hospital at East Dereham. This Hospital was opened in September, 1938. Formerly cases of infectious disease were admitted into the Wisbech Isolation Hospital. No difficulty is being experienced in getting patients to enter the new County Isolation Hospital, where the amenities and methods of treatment are the most up-to-date

**Ambulances.** The Downham Ambulance (Red Cross) stationed in Downham Market serves the Rural District for a radius of fifteen miles Infectious Disease cases are removed to Hospital by the County Isolation Hospital's own Ambulances.

**Welfare Centres.** There are three Infant Welfare Centres in your area, at which your Medical Officer attends one a month in each case ; they are situated at Feltwell, Methwold, and Southery. They afford an excellent liaison between the general public health services and the ancillary nursing-services, and are most useful as a centre of propaganda for better health-education.

**Laboratory Facilities.** Specimens for laboratory investigation are mostly forwarded to Norwich and examined in the County Laboratory. The following work was carried out during 1938 in respect of Downham Rural District :

Nature of Specimen	Result	
	Positive	Negative
Swabs for Diphtheria	13	70
Sputa for Tuberculosis	7	36
Blood for Typhoid examination	1	0
Excreta for Typhoid	0	2
" " Tuberculosis	0	2

## SECTION C. Sanitary circumstances of the Area.

**Water.** Extensions have been made by the Wisbech Water Works Co. in the following parishes: Marham Stow Bardolph, Tottenhill, Watlington, and Wormegay. In addition, a new 18-in. trunk main has been laid from Marham to March (Cambs.) Sixty miles of new mains were provided in Downham Rural District during the year. The Marham supply was examined chemically and bacteriologically at the source in March, 1938 and found to be of excellent quality for all domestic purposes. Regular quarterly analysis of the Feltwell supply has yielded similar results.

**Wells :** A very large number of shallow wells exist in your District, and these are examined in the course of routine Housing inspection. One well-supply gave an unsatisfactory analysis in December 1938, and steps have since been taken by your Council to have it replaced by a mains-supply. When circumstances permit chemical anaylsis are carried out by your Medical Officer, supported if necessary by confirmatory anaylsis made by the Clinical Research Association, the later both chemical and bacteriological.

No action was necessary during the year to prevent river or stream pollution.

### Refuse disposal:

- (a) **Dry refuse :** There is a weekly collection of house-refuse in Hilgay, by contract. At Feltwell, Wretton and Hockwold householders themselves deposit their dry refuse in specially built compounds. These are emptied by contract and the contents tipped into a quarry, as required. In other parishes dry refuse is collected by the householders themselves and dumped in the nearest pit allocated for the purpose. This results in a great amount of untidiness in village gardens, and I would bring to your notice that there is very considerable need for a complete scavenging scheme throughout the remainder of your District.



- (b) **Wet refuse :** There is no Sewage-purification-plant in the Rural District. There is, however, a weekly scavenging of night-soil in Hilgay, Downham West and Fincham by contract. This Scavenging system could, with advantage, be extended to other villages.  
There were no extensions of sewerage systems during the year.

**Closets :** number of conversions 9.

Number of closets of each type remaining at the end of the year :—  
Privy-vaults 20%. Water-flushed 14%. Pail-closets 66%.

**Schools :** The sanitary conveniences of the Schools in your area are mostly in a reasonably satisfactory state. There still a small number of Schools whose sole water-supply comes from rain-water tanks or even direct from the river.

There are no public or private swimming pools open to the public within the area of the Council.

**Camping Sites :** Application was made for one caravan-camping-site during 1938. Your Council granted a License under P.H.A. 1936 Section 269. This site has been inspected by your Medical Officer and is very satisfactory.

Estimated maximum number of campers resident at any one time during summer, 1938—10.

#### Tabular Statement of Sanitary Inspection :

(a)	Number of premises inspected and revisited	...	612
(b)	Number of notices served	...	93
(c)	Number of notices complied with	...	53
(d)	Cases of overcrowding complied with	...	12
(e)	Families vacating condemned houses	...	10
(f)	Prosecutions	...	2
(g)	Number of premises closed	...	1
(h)	Number of premises cleansed	...	5
(i)	Animal removed	...	3

## SECTION D.

## HOUSING.

In December, 1938, a complete Housing Survey of every Parish in Downham Rural District was commenced, simultaneously with an investigation into housing conditions by the County Medical Officer. The results of these investigations will be dealt with in full in the Annual Report for 1939.

The following table refers to the year under review:

1. **Inspections during the year:-**
  1. (a) Total number of houses inspected for defects ... 462
  - (b) Number of inspections made for the purpose ... 594
  2. Number of houses found to be unfit for human habitation ... 235
  3. Number of houses (exclusive of 2.) found not to be in all respects reasonably fit for habitation 84
2. **Remedy of defects during the year WITHOUT service of formal notices :-**

Number of defective houses rendered fit by informal action by L.A. or their officers ... 49
3. **Action under Statutory powers during the year.**
  - (a) Proceedings under sections 9, 10, 16 of the Housing Acts, 1936 :
    1. Number of houses in respect of which notices were served requiring repairs ... 16
    2. Number of houses rendered fit after service of formal notices :-
      - (a) By owners ... 10
      - (b) By L.A. in default of owners... Nil
  - (b) Proceedings under Public Health Acts :
    1. Number of houses in respect of which notices were served requiring defects to be remedied 46
    2. Number of houses in which defects were remedied after service of formal notices :
      - (a) By owners ... 39
      - (b) By Local Authority in default of owners... Nil
  - (c) Proceedings under Housing Act, 1936, sections 11 and 13 :
    1. Number of houses in respect of which Demolition Orders were made ... 22
    2. Number of houses demolished in respect of Demolition orders ... 10
  - (d) Proceedings under Housing Act, 1936, Section 12 :

Number of separate tenements in respect of which Closing Orders were made ... Nil
4. **Housing Act, 1936 : Overcrowding.**
  - (a) 1. Number of dwellings overcrowded at the end of the year ... 75
  2. Number of families dwelling therein ... 75
  3. Number of persons dwelling therein ... 467
  - (b) Number of new cases of overcrowding reported during the year... Nil
  - (c) 1. Number of cases of overcrowding relieved during the year ... 12
  2. Number of persons concerned in such cases ... 58
5. **Number of New Houses built during 1938.**
  - (a) By private enterprise ... 36
  - (b) Under Housing Acts by Local Authority ... 32

SECTION E. Inspection and Supervision of Food.

(a) Milk :	Number of farms and dairies inspected	...	...	224
	Number of samples taken	...	...	96
	of these 31 were bulk samples for Tubercle.			
	Number of Cowkeepers registered	...	...	282
	" " Premises	...	...	251
	" " Retailers	...	...	78
	" " Wholesalers	...	...	118
(b) Meat :	Number of registered slaughterhouses	...	...	34
	Carcases inspected and condemned.			
	Number killed not available.		Number inspected	282.
	All diseases except Tuberculosis	whole carcases condemned :	1 Cow	
	Tuberculosis only whole carcass	...	...	1 Cow
	No adulteration of any foodstuff was detected during the year.			

SECTION F. Infectious Diseases.

There was a decline in the amount of infectious disease in 1938 as compared with the previous year. In 1938, 40 cases of Scarlet fever and 14 cases of Diphtheria were notified as against 57 cases of Scarlet Fever and 56 of Diphtheria during 1937. Whilst Scarlet Fever remained the most prevalent infectious disease, most cases were of the milder type. There is little advantage, in many cases, in removing Scarlet Fever cases to Hospital, providing suitable isolation can be afforded at home. This is definitely not so in the case of Diphtheria, when early Hospitalisation is most desirable.

Many immunisations against Diphtheria were carried out in 1937 and previously. Very few were done in 1938. The immunisation scheme has therefore been revived during the present year, and details will be given in next year's Report.

Details of the infectious diseases notified during 1938 is given below :—

Disease	Total notified	admitted to Hospital	Total Deaths
Scarlet Fever ...	40	21	Nil
Diphtheria ...	14	8	Nil
Enteric Fever ...	2	1	Nil
Pneumonia ...	8	Nil	5
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	1	Nil	1
Erysipelas ..	8	Nil	Nil
Totals	73	30	6

Distribution of Ages.

	Below 1 yr.	1	2	3	4	5	10	15	20	35	45	Over 65
Scarlet Fever ...	1	...	1	2	2	15	9	6	3	1	...	...
Diphtheria ...	...	...	...	...	1	7	1	1	3	1	..	...
Enteric Fever ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	1	...	...
Puerperal Pyrexia ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...
Pneumonia ...	1	1	2	...	...	2	...	...	2	...	...	...
Erysipelas ...	...	...	...	...	...	1	...	...	...	...	5	2

TUBERCULOSIS. New Cases and Mortality during 1938.

Age-groups	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-respiratory	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	...	...	1	...	..	...	...	...
5	...	...	2	1	...	...	...	...
15	...	...	2	...	1	1	...	...
25	...	1	...	..	...	...	...	...
35	...	1	...	...	...	1	...	...
45	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
55	...	2	...	...	1	2	...	...